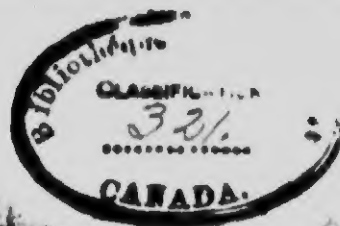
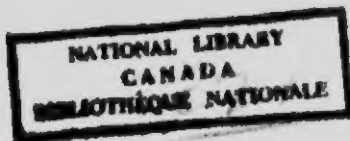


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THE PROBLEM OF POPULAR GOVERNMENT.*

BY W. D. LESUEUR, LL.D.

THERE are many distinct problems of popular government, but the one great and comprehensive problem which it presents is: how the best results may be obtained from it—how it may be made to work for the highest good of the community in which it is established. Popular Government, or Democracy, is now an almost universal datum throughout the western world, in which, of course, we include western Europe. Early in the last century, as we must now designate the nineteenth, the philosophical De Tocqueville somewhat sadly proclaimed its coming, bidding the world prepare for a *régime* under which privilege, precedent, personal authority, the sagacity of the statesman, the wisdom of the philosopher, and the erudition of the scholar would alike be swept out of sight by one vast wave of popular domination. He mentions in his correspondence that, in America, he had found manners and ideas uniformly commonplace; and what he feared was that Democracy everywhere would simply mean the reign of commonplace. To a refined and sensitive spirit the prospect was not encouraging; but a robust philosophy might, perhaps, have enabled him to feel that there was still hope for the world—that, however mediocrity might assert itself for a time, the finer fruits of the human spirit would flourish again in due season. Some, however, of De Tocqueville's contemporaries were not disposed to acquiesce in the opinion that the universal triumph of democracy was inevitable. They saw the foe advancing, and armed themselves to give him battle. Our own annals afford a conspicuous example of this political temper in the person of Sir Francis Bond Head, who, sixty-three years ago, was administering in this city the government of the Province of Upper Canada. "The British Constitution," he says in one of his despatches to the Colonial Office, "has nothing to dread from its low-bred antagonist (democracy) in America if His Majesty's Government will not avert from us its support." He was greatly scandalized to hear that instructions had been given to the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick to endeavour to place in his Council "gentlemen representing the various interests which exist in the Province, and possessing at the same time the confidence of the people at large." It seemed to him, and he said as much to the Colonial Secretary (Lord Glenelg), that this was neither more nor less than giving the highest official countenance to anarchy. He speaks in another despatch of "the repeated repulses which the American people have met with whenever they have attempted to invade Canada for the purpose of forcing upon us their loathsome institutions." That Sir Francis was

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a high-minded man—a much more high-minded man than some of the Reformers with whom he had to contend—no impartial reader of his "Narrative" can doubt; but he was on the losing side. He was a man of great force of character, and he had in fact rallied a large portion of the Province to his views; but the Colonial Office clearly saw that a cause which depended on personal force of character could not be permanently sustained. He was informed that "His Majesty's Government looks to no transient results or temporary triumphs." Finally, as you are aware, he sacrificed his office rather than obey the instructions he had received to restore a certain person to office whom he had thought it proper to remove.

I do not know whether the conflict between the two irreconcilable ideas of personal government and popular government can be better studied than in the volume to which I have been referring. It is almost impossible not to sympathize with the champion of the dying cause; and yet the very heroism which he throws into the fight gives foreboding of failure. His opponents did not require to be heroic, nor yet uncommonly straightforward. They only needed to unite on a policy, and pursue it with persistence. What they wanted above all things was control of the patronage; and that they got through the establishment of what was called "responsible government."

At the time that Sir Francis was waging his hopeless contest in this Province the Reform Bill (1832) had already been passed in England. That bill, as it proved, contained in germ the whole democratic system of government; but this was not perceived at the time by its authors, nor even, for the most part, by its opponents. It contained the principle of Democracy in this respect, that it gave *substantial* representation to the masses of the people; the play of party politics did the rest. So long as there is an untouched reservoir of political power anywhere, so long will it attract the covetous glances of the party most likely to profit by tapping it. It is difficult for the practical politician to pass by a mass of possible votes *irretortis oculis*. At the same time many were the declarations made that there was no intention, or even thought, of democratizing the Constitution of England. Lord John Russell declared in 1837 that, so far as he was concerned, the settlement of 1832 was final. "Having," he said, "only five years ago reformed the representation, having placed it on a new basis, it would be a most unwise and unsound experiment now to begin the process again. . . . I say, at least for myself, that I can take no share in such an experiment." As we all know, however, that indefatigable statesman did in later years take part in several such experiments. In 1854, and again in 1859, he made unsuccessful attempts to carry further measures of reform. On the latter occasion he is recorded to have said: "I wish to disclaim entirely any intention to frame a new Constitution. I disclaim such a project for two reasons. One is that I have no wish to alter the Constitution of this House; the other is that, if any such alteration were sought, I should feel totally unable to propose anything that would stand in the place of

the ancient and glorious Constitution of the country." This sentiment was echoed and reinforced by Mr. Disraeli on the other side of the House. "We think," he said, "that the English Constitution is not a mere phrase. We believe that we live under a monarchy, modified in its action by the authority of estates of the realm. . . . Under a democracy we do not live, and I trust it will never be the fate of the country to live." In 1839 Lord Palmerston was at the head of the Government; and it was an open secret that he was far from enthusiastic for the cause of Reform. In reply to some one who was maintaining that, even though the suffrage were extended, the same class of men would continue to be elected to Parliament, he is reported to have said: "Yes; I dare say the actors will be the same but they will play to the galleries instead of to the boxes." We all know the course which Parliamentary Reform followed in England: how Lord Russell was again unfortunate with his bill of 1866, and how Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli put their heads together to "dish the Whigs" with their more radical measure of the following year, which became law. It was at the latter date that Deleme, the celebrated editor of the *Times*, said, as quoted in a letter of Lord Houghton's, that "the extreme party for reform are now the grandees; and the dukes are quite ready to follow Beale into Hyde Park." Disraeli had educated his party with a vengeance—all except the three recalcitrants, the Earl of Carnarvon, General Peel and Viscount Cranbourne, now Lord Salisbury. The Whigs, however, were not so completely "dished" as had been hoped, for they came back into power with a rush in the first election held under the new Act. Still, the name "democracy" remained in disfavour. Even in 1884, when Mr. Gladstone brought in and carried his last Reform Bill, he disclaimed any intention "to call into existence a majority of working class electors." With the dexterity that characterized him, and made him so extraordinary a "Parliamentary hand," he added the significant words: "I cannot say I think it would be attended with any great danger, but I am sure it is not according to the present view or expectations of Parliament." In spite of all disclaimers, however, the Constitution of England was by these successive measures being steadily democratized; and at this moment, in the opinion of no less an authority than Sir H. S. Maine, it rests on a more dangerously democratic basis than that of the United States.

If I might be allowed to give my own definition of Democracy, I should say it was a system of government under which the sovereign power of the State—the great "Leviathan" of Hobbes—was distributed, as the lawyers say, "per capita." Let x be the sovereign power of the State in its totality and n the varying number of citizens, then $\frac{x}{n}$ represents each man's share of power. This formula takes no account of moral or intellectual force, which cannot be severed from the individual possessing it. This, alas! is the fly in the precious ointment of pure and unadulterated Democracy, or Democracy conceived as absolute equality between

man and man. If a man has money we can take it from him. If he has physical force, he can be overpowered by numbers; but if he has intelligence and force of character we cannot seize upon these. Democracy, let me hasten to say, has its foundations deep in human nature. The whole philosophy of it is summed up in a single line of Æschylus, on which my eye casually fell the other day, and which, in this place, I may venture to repeat:

Ἐκὼν γὰρ οὐδεὶς δουλίῳ χρήται ζυγῷ—

the English of which is simply, "No one willingly bears a servile yoke." In a State, the power of which is made up of the aggregate strength of all its members, no man likes to think that, while contributing strength and helping to make the arm of the law effective, he has no voice whatever in public affairs. Political Economy and the Bible, it has been said, have been the two great preachers of Democracy—Political Economy by concentrating attention upon what is to the common advantage, and taking no account of political privilege; the Bible, by proclaiming the essential equality of all men, and basing all social relations on the Golden Rule. However this may be, Democracy has come, it is with us now, and there is every appearance that it is going to stay. Even were we opposed to it, we might well exclaim in the words of a great poet:

*"Far other bark than ours were needed now
To stem the torrent of descending time."*

But no reasonable man will oppose himself to that which he sees to be inevitable. Rather, perceiving it to be inevitable, he will seek out the causes and conditions which, in making it so, make it also best suited on the whole to the age in which it has appeared.

How much obloquy has been heaped upon popular government it would weary you to tell. Those of you who have read Sir Henry Maine's work entitled "Popular Government" know with what dignified irony he treats the hopes which Democracy has inspired in its champions and advocates. Those of you again who have read Mr. Lecky's volumes have not failed to recognize his evident desire to place popular government in the worst possible light. No doubt both these eminent writers say many things that are true; they point out real flaws and weaknesses in popular government; but they do not attempt to show how the tendency of the times in the direction of Democracy is to be reversed. I cannot help agreeing with the verdict of Mr. John Morley, on the first of these writers. "Sir Henry Maine," he says, "is a bureaucrat who cannot bear to think that Democracy will win. . . . His tone is that of a political valetudinarian, watching with uneasy eye the ways of rude health." Mr. Lecky, too, is a writer who, as his later writings have particularly shown, and, I may add, as he is exhibited to us by no mean judge of character, "Punch," is more or less disgusted with life, and consequently with Democracy. No despondent man, however, can be a safe guide. The men to trust are those who, if they have to recognize evil,

think at once of the remedies that can be applied, or look beyond the evil to the good that may eventually be evolved from it. Say what we will of Democracy it means political life of a certain kind for everybody except those who turn aside from the boon because they are obliged to share it with so many quite plain people.

Let us admit that Democracy is open to much criticism, that its ways are not the ways of the philosopher or the saint, that there is a terrible flavour of average humanity, and sometimes of inferior humanity, about its doings; all that does not prove that it is not in theory, or that it is not destined to become in practice, the best form of human government. When a child is learning to walk we do not feel like deriding its hesitation and timidity, or exulting over its falls. Popular government, to my mind, is very much in the position of a child learning to walk. The child is born unable to walk, but it *must* learn to walk; its whole future development depends on the acquisition of that accomplishment. Human societies, in like manner, are born unfit for self-government; but their complete development depends on their becoming fit for it. That seems to me to be the case in a nutshell. The stage of imperfect attempts, marked by many lapses and many more or less ungainly movements, has to be passed through. We are yet in that stage, and clever writers, if they are so minded, can find much to satirize in our performances. But, looking at the main question, who can deny that a community in which each individual contributed some grain of wisdom or moral force to the general direction of affairs, would constitute a high political type than one in which a few ruled and the rest subordinated to their dictation, however benevolent that dictation might be. The problem of popular government is precisely the problem how to make each individual a helpful, not a retarding or an opposing, influence in the work of good government. The historian Grote has well said that "No system of government, even supposing it to be very much better and more faultless than the Athenian democracy, can ever pretend to accomplish its legitimate end apart from the personal character of the people, or to supersede the necessity of individual virtue and vigour." Democracy comes to the individual citizen without respect to social rank and says, "The time has come for you to assume a share in influencing and directing the government of your country. You may not at present have all the qualifications required for that duty, but you cannot begin earlier; and it is necessary that you, a citizen, should acquire the education of a citizen. Therefore begin now, follow your best judgment, try to rise superior to purely selfish interests, and in due time you will find yourself doing fairly well."

Unfortunately this is not the prevalent conception of the meaning of Democracy or of the nature of its appeal. The idea that the power once possessed by one, or by a limited class, is now divided amongst the whole people is familiar enough; but the idea that each man should try himself by the rule which he applies to the monarchs and oligarchs of the past is not a familiar one. We condemn the rulers of the past

because they did not consider themselves the mere trustees of power, and study at all times the good of the whole people. And yet, I fear the common idea to-day is that each man's vote is his own private property, to be used as may best suit his private ends. It was for a precisely similar misuse of power that some monarchs have lost their heads in times past. That a man's vote is not absolutely his own to do what he likes with is proved by the laws against bribery. Unfortunately, the laws against bribery cannot reach all forms of bribery, cannot touch, for example, the shameless offers often made of vote and influence in return for some favour or other from the government of the day. There is something very discouraging, it must be admitted, in the willingness of the people, as the phrase is, to be bribed with their own money—in such a phenomenon, for example, as the monotonous regularity with which bye-elections go in favour of a government with a strong majority.

In this respect it can hardly be claimed that the wealthier classes show an example of singular virtue to their humbler fellow-citizens. Look at this portly gentleman, dressed in irreproachable English tweed, with a decided dash of social culture, who comes forward to address an audience of electors in a mining town. Being the person of the most weight in the community, he has been elected chairman of the meeting; nevertheless he ventures an opinion of his own. "Gentlemen," he says, "as chairman I have not much to say to you on this occasion. I shall just say, this, however, that the question you have to consider is, in my opinion, a very simple one; namely, whether the party in power or the party out of power is likely to do most for the business interests of this locality. We need not wander beyond that." Here was the keynote struck by a man possessing all the advantages of education, social position and pecuniary independence, which go to make up a typical specimen of what used to be called the "ruling classes." A discussion follows, and some very plain citizens seem to think that certain other questions, more remote from their own local interests, might properly be taken into consideration. The great man, however, speaks again, and makes it clear that he looks with great disfavour on all such divagations. I dare say many of you have witnessed scenes very similar to this. My own sketch is drawn from life, and it seems to me to cast a somewhat doubtful light on the influence exerted by those so-called higher classes who, fifty years ago or so, were thought to be the only safe depositaries of political power. Is Democracy, it may be asked, having a fair trial when men of wealth and influence are doing their utmost to hold it down to the most inferior conceptions and practices? There is worse than this, however; there is the fierce contempt which men conducting large enterprises sometimes show for political issues of all kinds, and their avowed willingness to throw all their influence on the side of any government whatever with which they can make an advantageous deal.

Everyone remembers Montesquieu's dictum about the different forms of government and their respective fundamental principles. Absolute governments must repose on fear, monarchies on honour, aristocracies on

moderation, and republics on virtue. To someone who cited the remark as to republics to Alexander Hamilton, the latter replied that, in his opinion, what republics most depended on was corrupt. Montesquieu, however, was perfectly right in postulating public virtue as a condition of the permanence of republics. If the electorate as a whole is corrupt, republican institutions will be of short duration. On the other hand, Hamilton was not altogether wrong in his fling as to the necessity of corruption. There is no absolute contradiction between the two views: the one refers to the conditions for the *existence* of a republic, the other to the conditions necessary as things are to the carrying on of the work of government. The more public virtue there is, the less need will there be for resorting to Hamilton's prescription for keeping the machinery of government going. Raise the level of public virtue and certain things which are now only done from interested and selfish motives will be done from disinterested and unselfish ones. Raise the level of public virtue and better laws will be passed, and once passed will be observed, not evaded. Raise the level of public virtue and the whole political system will work with greater power towards better ends. But meantime many compromises that would not look well in broad daylight have to be made.

Sir Henry Maine speaks with great severity of the abject flattery administered to the multitude by those who would win its favour. To whom, however, is this mainly a reproach? It is indeed to be regretted that the populace should not have a more delicate taste in this matter than the monarchs and other great ones of the past before whom men of intellect used to debase themselves; but what are we to think of the more or less educated gentlemen who purvey the stuff? If the people would take a true measure of themselves they would be aided by referring to a book that never flatters, and that knows nothing of party views. They would there find such utterances as these:

"Why do . . . the people imagine a vain thing?"

"Where no counsel is, the people fail."

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

"The people that know their good shall be strong."

"The people that do not understand shall fall."

I do not imagine that in relation to the problems of to-day "the people" of to-day enjoy any advantage over "the people" of the times of Daniel or Hosea. In simpler times there were simpler problems; the problems of our time tax the wisdom of the wisest; so that now, as ever, the people need to take heed against imagining vain things and against acting without counsel or vision. To believe in their own infallibility is a sure way of falling into hurtful errors. Yet something like this state of mind

does exist, there is reason to fear, in democratic communities. "No observer of American politics," says a very able writer, Mr. E. L. Godkin, "can deny that, with regard to matters that can become the subject of legislation, the American voter listens with extreme impatience to anything which has the air of instruction; but the explanation is to be found not so much in his dislike of instruction as in his dislike, in the political field, of anything which savours of superiority. The truth seems to be," he continues, "that, with regard to all matters within the field of politics, the new democracy is exceedingly sensitive about any doubts of its competency. It will not suffer any question, or sign of question, of its full capacity to deal with any matter which calls for legislation."

Other testimonies can be cited to the same effect. The late James Russell Lowell, in his essay on Abraham Lincoln, written in 1864, expresses surprise that, "in a country which boasts of its intelligence, the theory should be so generally held that the most complicated of human contrivances, and one which every day becomes more complicated, can be worked at sight by any man able to talk for an hour or two without stopping to think." Again, Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts, in an article written only a few months ago, says: "Some people never seem to learn that the task of governing a great people is a serious and difficult task, and that the task of governing itself, by a great people, is more serious and difficult still."

The psychology of the case is not, I think, hard to understand. We are all familiar with the adage, "Every man to his trade." Negatively, it means that nobody should dabble in a trade that is not his and that he does not understand; and, positively, it means that every man is assumed to understand *his own* trade. The expansion of free institutions has thrown the work of government into the hands of the people, therefore government has become *their* trade; therefore they must know all about it; or, if they do not, they must refuse to acknowledge the fact. They must not let any college-bred man, or other superior person, affect to teach them their trade. The average voter does not like to think that there are any technicalities in the art of government or of administration which any plain man is not capable of dealing with. As to the government service, it is filled with *our* clerks, and of course, like other employers, we are all quite capable of telling *our* clerks what to do. A well-disposed village blacksmith in the neighborhood of Ottawa once offered me a "lift" in his buggy. As we drove along we passed the house of a prominent civil servant, when my friend enquired what salary the gentleman in question had. I said I was not sure, but thought about two thousand dollars; whereupon, turning to me, the man of muscle said very earnestly: "No man can earn two thousand dollars a year at a desk." He was himself earning at least that amount in his forge and carriage shop; but he did not think the feat could be honestly performed at a desk. My friend was a man of more than average intelligence and business ability, and his blunt declaration gave me a measure of the importance attached by the people to the work of the public departments.

It must all be very simple, because, theoretically, it is all such work as the humblest voter could, if necessary, either perform or direct. In the United States the theory is now freely advanced that the President does not need to be a man of any special ability; if he only does what the people tell him he will be clever enough. In this country I imagine that the only ability that is distinctly recognized as necessary is the ability to outwit opponents in the political field.

We seem here to be face to face with a paradox. On the one hand government is committed to the people; and it is so far assumed that they are capable of performing the political duties thus devolved on them. On the other hand it is a matter of certainty that the majority of the voters are not very good judges either of the larger questions of politics, or of the details of administration. They are very mediocre judges of what constitutes their own interest in many matters. A nation may want to hold silver in unlimited quantities at par with gold in some arbitrarily chosen ratio; but it does not follow from their wanting it that the thing is feasible, or that the bare attempt to carry it into effect would not be fraught with disaster. A nation may want a high tariff, or government ownership of railways and telegraphs, or a system of old age pensions, or compulsory arbitration, or an elective judiciary, or a strict prohibitory liquor law; or it may hanker after a foreign war, or experience a sudden yearning for a vigorous policy of colonial expansion; but it would be fatuous to imagine that any one of these measures would be secure from failure because it had been demanded by a popular majority. Mr. Frederic Harrison says that "Very plain men know who wish them well, and the sort of thing that will bring them good." To the first half of this statement I am ready to give a general assent; but in regard to the latter half I am far from certain. All depends upon the complexity of the question under consideration, and many of the questions of politics are most complex.

What, then, is the solution of the paradox? The solution seems to me to lie here: the suffrage is not a privilege, but a trust, and universal suffrage does not signify that all men are equally and fully capable of grappling with political questions of whatever order, but that all have an interest in the wise decision of such questions. The art of government is not any men's trade or mystery; it presents an inexhaustible problem in the solution of which we may all co-operate. The fact that a certain section of society may cast a majority of votes does not confer upon them any special competence in dealing with political issues. It may give them power, but as Horace says:

"Vis consili expers mole ruit sua."

It is too narrow a view to take of the suffrage to regard it merely as a means of protection for each member of the community. Without questioning the maxim that taxation without representation is tyranny, we cannot consider it as summing up the whole philosophy of the suffrage. The late Mr. Lowe (Lord Sherbrooke) talked most mischievously when he insisted, as he did, upon the necessity of "educating our

masters." In a free state no man is master of any other, nor is there any need that he should be. What Mr. Lowe was really afraid of was that the mastery previously possessed by a limited class should pass out of their hands.

In the present day we are accustomed to make a broad distinction between legislation and government ; but, in point of fact, legislation is one of the two great divisions of government, the other being administration. Parliament makes laws ; the duty of the executive is to administer those laws faithfully and honestly, without respect to persons and with a sole view to the public good.

As regards legislation an important point to notice is the altered position of the legislator as compared with that which he occupied under a more limited suffrage. If we go back a little over one hundred years, we find Edmund Burke addressing the electors of Bristol as follows : "If we do not allow our members to act upon a very enlarged view of things, we shall at length infallibly degrade our national representation into a *confused and scuffling bustle of local agency*." Burke wanted a strong and enlightened Parliament to stand up against an encroaching court ; and he did not think Parliament could be strong if its members were reduced to the rank of mere delegates—echoes, not voices. It is impossible not to be struck with his foresight when he speaks of the danger that Parliament may degenerate into "a confused and scuffling bustle of local agency." I think the words describe something with which we are not wholly unacquainted in this country, and which exists in great perfection across our border. I must, however, quote a few words more to show the distance we have travelled since Burke's time. Referring to the course he had held in regard to the troubles in Ireland, he says : "I conformed to the instructions of truth and nature, and maintained your interest against your opinions with a constancy that became me. A representative worthy of you ought to be a person of stability. I am to look indeed to your opinions, but to such opinions as you and I must have five years hence. I was not to look to the flash of the day. I knew that you chose me with others to be a pillar of the state, and not a weathercock, on the top of the edifice, exalted for my levity and versatility." In a former speech he had said : "Your representative owes you not his industry only but his judgment, and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion. . . . Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests. . . . It is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole, where not local purposes and local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good. . . . You choose a member indeed, but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but a member of Parliament."

A generation or more later, when the Reform Bill of 1832 was being introduced, Sir Robert Inglis, the member for Oxford, took a very similar stand. "This House," he said, "is not a collection of deputies as the States General of Holland, and as the assemblies in some other

countries. We are not sent here *day by day* to represent the ideas of our constituents. Their local rights, their municipal privileges we are bound to protect; their general interests we are bound to consult at all times, but not their will, unless it shall coincide with our own deliberate sense of right." More explicit still, if possible, is the following declaration of the same speaker: "We are not sent here for the particular spot we represent, but to consider the affairs of the country and the good of the church. When a member is returned to this House he ceases to be responsible to his constituency. It is at the end of the period for which he has to serve them in Parliament that he again comes before them and it is then only that he is accountable to them." We may come forward another generation still, to the date of the publication of Mr. Mill's "Representative Government," and find the same principle not yet extinct. "A man of conscience and known ability," says that philosopher, "should insist on full freedom to act as he, in his own judgment, deems best, and should not consent to act on any other terms." Since that time the doctrine in question has been less and less heard of; and to-day the "delegate" theory of parliamentary representation may be said to be thoroughly established. Where could we find a constituency in Canada that would elect either Burke or John Stuart Mill on the conditions they lay down? If one is to be found, I should be disposed to look for it in the Province of Quebec, where the voters have not yet been educated into jealousy of superior talents, or into distrust of wider views.

The effect of the change has undoubtedly been to impair the character of modern parliaments considered as deliberative bodies, as well as their ability to deal with great measures. There can be no true deliberation without a certain amount of openness to conviction. As things are to-day each member feels bound to carry out the understanding he had with his electors and support the party he undertook to support. An atrophy of the deliberative function of representative bodies has thus set in. How far it will proceed, and what modern parliaments will be reduced to, remains to be seen. How a political structure intended to have a distinct use of its own may undergo complete atrophy we may observe in the case of the college of so-called Presidential Electors in the United States. According to the Constitution these electors were to exercise a real choice of their own; but to-day, and indeed for long since, the college has dwindled into a purely formal device for registering the popular vote. Much is heard nowadays of the machine in politics. It is not much praised in public, though I believe it is sometimes "hugged" in private. Delicacy would of course prescribe privacy for so affectionate an operation. An enterprising newspaper was proposing some time ago to "smash the machine," and, if there were two—of which there was more than a suspicion—to "smash them both." How it was going to be done was not explained, nor who was to be the smasher; and, so far as I can learn, the feat has not yet been accomplished. The fact is that the machine is an absolutely necessary accompaniment of universal suffrage in the present condition of society. It is a kind of primary

school of politics, an institution in which raw, untutored minds get their first introduction to political ideas and methods. If there were any possibility of getting into a blue book a representative selection of the correspondence of the local machines throughout the country, with a few samples of the higher epistolary style of the Provincial and Dominion staff officers, I think the country would start back at the revelation. It would not want to hug either the machine or itself. It is wonderful how ugly a little daylight makes some things look. At the same time good comes out even of this seething mass of evil. The primary school does not give a finished education, but it educates up to a certain point those who have any capacity to learn. The member of the local committee is trained to a certain sense of responsibility. He learns what can be done and what cannot be done. He finds out that men are not always governed by their lowest motives. He finds his more disreputable proceedings encountering the reprobation of the decent part of the community. He gets disgusted with the unmitigated self-seeking of some of those with whom he has to deal, and possibly he has some useful fits of reflection on his own doings. If his party is in opposition he may learn some lessons of disinterestedness. We may further say this for the machine, that it is a contrivance for getting work done that would not otherwise be done. After its own fashion it keeps alive an interest in politics; it greatly helps to "bring out the vote" in a general election.

It is a somewhat singular thing that the framers of the Constitution of the United States do not seem to have any prevision of the difficulty there would be in getting the people as a whole to act in political matters. The explanation may, perhaps, be found in the fact that they had been accustomed chiefly to town meetings, in which, the subjects discussed being of local interest, decisions were easily arrived at. The Constitution, however, had not been long in operation before there was found to be a missing link—a device for getting the people interested and bringing them to the polls. It was to meet this need that the machine may be said to have been invented. As an impelling and controlling force it has since been brought to great perfection; and yet it cannot be said that the machine itself has either a clear insight into large political questions or any great interest in them. It does not, in fact, look upon great questions with favour. Its saws are not adapted to cut such lumber. It does not argue the question of the tariff, or of grants to higher education, or of Imperial federation, nor yet of prohibition; it approaches the elector with personal solicitation, and with arguments addressed more or less directly to his self-interest. The highest note it ever strikes is local interest: it sometimes reaches that. It does not make the issues that are presented to the country. These are hammered out in the press and, to a much less extent, in Parliament; but it gives many a shrewd hint to the party leaders as to what questions should *not* be allowed to grow into issues. The instinct of the party politician is to fight shy of all large questions; he always sees in them more of danger than of safety, more chances of loss than of gain.

We strike here an ugly feature of the party system. Why do practical politicians shrink so much from dealing with large questions? Simply because they know that unfair means will be tried to embarrass them in carrying such measures through. To bring forward some large measure of legislation is to deploy in the open before an entrenched enemy. The theoretical justification of a parliamentary Opposition is that the acts and measures of every Government require criticism. True, but criticism does not imply deliberate misconstruction and misrepresentation. What should we think of a literary critic who, sitting down to the examination of a book, professedly allowed himself to be dominated by a desire to create as much odium as possible in the mind of the public against the writer? And yet we all know that this is precisely the line an Opposition in Parliament and in the press usually takes in regard to the measures of the Government of the day. The thing is done by each side in turn, so that it is difficult for either side to feel any very genuine indignation when their own methods are retorted on them. What a common thing it is to see this or that casual and really harmless remark of some public man converted by party malice into a studied insult to some sect or class in the community! What a ready recourse there is to charges of want of patriotism! What sad use has been made in more than one emergency of the appeal to national and religious prejudice!

It is impossible to associate much with politicians without being struck by their extraordinary and, as it seems to me, morbid sensitiveness to what they call public opinion. What they are really afraid of is less public opinion than public silliness. If the public only knew how little common sense they are credited with by the very men who, on the hustings, load them with every kind of flattery, they would feel far from complimented. The common idea among politicians is that the people can be stampeded by a word, a phrase, some unguarded expression or trifling act which in any way touches, or might be so misinterpreted and twisted as to appear to touch, a popular prejudice. It is, of course, taken for granted, and rightly as things go, that opponents will do their utmost to make mischief out of the word, phrase or act; but where is that confidence in the superior judgment and sterling common sense of the masses of the people of which we hear so much on certain occasions? Can the voters be at once so wise as we are told, and also so strongly resemble a herd of buffaloes with their snouts in the air ready for a whirlwind dash at the faintest scent of danger? I do not readily reconcile the two conceptions.

There was a politician once, a true man of the people, who did not believe in the buffalo herd theory. That man was Abraham Lincoln. Of him James Russell Lowell, in his celebrated essay, has said: "This was a true Democrat, who grounded himself on the assumption that a democracy can think. 'Come, let us reason together about this matter,' has been the tone of all his addresses to the people. . . . He put himself on a level with those he addressed, not by going down to them, but only by taking for granted that they had brains, and would come up

to a common ground of reason. And accordingly," adds Mr. Lowell, speaking for the people of the United States, "we have never had a chief magistrate who so won to himself the love, and at the same time the judgment, of his countrymen. To us that simple confidence of his in the right-mindedness of his fellowmen is very touching, and its success is as strong an argument as we have ever seen in favour of the theory that men can govern themselves."

Time flies; it is thirty-six or thirty-seven years since that essay was written, and a change may have passed over the spirit of democracy; it may be that there is a "*facilis descensus*" for self-governing as well as for autocratically-governed communities; but, for my own part, I should be inclined still to have faith in Lincoln's method. One, however, who would walk in Lincoln's footsteps needs to have Lincoln's simplicity, sincerity and strong human sympathy. Of him it may be said that he was a true shepherd of his people, and that the people knew his voice.

What are the voices that people ordinarily hear in the political controversies and discussions of our time? Broadly speaking, are not all the voices merely repetitions of one voice—the voice of Codlin strenuously warning us that *he* is the friend, not Short? In Codlin we must put our trust if all our interests are not to be wrecked. It is at our own risk if we have any dealings with Short. The great trouble with Codlin is that he is not disinterested. If he is in power he wants to stay there; if he is out of power he wants to get there. I do not say, and I am far from thinking, that there is no disinterestedness amongst public men; but I do say that parties *as parties* are not disinterested. Their primary object is power, not the good of the country. To get power they will do many things that are not for the good of the people; to retain power likewise. In saying this one merely repeats the unceasing criticisms of the parties on one another. But is it really possible, one may ask, for a party either to gain or retain power by acts that are not for the good of the people? It is not necessary for my present purpose to maintain that it *is* possible; it is enough to say that political parties *think* it possible sometimes, and act accordingly. But as I am not here to flatter any one, but simply to offer my humble contribution to the discussion of a great subject, I will venture to go farther, and say that parties *may* climb into power on false issues, and may retain it for a time by specious but really hurtful legislation. This is but another way of saying that the people may at times be imposed upon. But, as Abraham Lincoln remarked, they cannot be imposed upon "all the time."

It would really be a great thing if some one from a position of advantage could talk plainly to people about the actual facts of current politics. It is not ornate phrases that are wanted, but honest grappling with realities. The question should be put fairly and squarely to the people: How far they think it is right for any man to have pecuniary motives of a personal kind for supporting this or that candidate or party. Bribery by means of five dollar notes is punishable by law; but what moral difference is there between bribery of this kind and bribery by the

promise of petty offices and the thousand and one advantages which a party in power can deal out, and does deal out, to its supporters? It is an accepted principle of politics that constituencies returning Government supporters shall be more favoured than those returning members of the Opposition. "If I had a son," I once heard a member of Parliament say, "that cheeked me, do you think I should feel like doing anything for him? I rather think not. Well, neither should a Government do anything for constituencies that go against it." This was several years ago; but much more recently a bright young man, a political worker in one of the newer parts of the country, remarked to me that a new constituency should always side with the Government of the day, as otherwise its growing interests would be in danger of being overlooked. Is it not time that *some* one should say to the people of Canada: "Come, let us reason about this matter. Is the suffrage in this country free or is it not? What do you understand by a free suffrage? You mean, do you not, that every citizen is at perfect liberty to vote according to his views and convictions of public duty? But can a man be said to be at *perfect* liberty to vote in that way if certain very material disadvantages attach to his exercising the suffrage in opposition to the Government of the day? You know, of course," such a speaker would add, "that no man who has voted against a Government candidate has the remotest chance of any public employment unless he recants his political opinions, and promises to reverse his vote on the next occasion. Is this freedom? If so, what would you understand by restraint? You have heard of "pulls," have you not? The way to get a "pull" is to "swing" votes—that is the up-to-date expression. The more votes you can swing, the stronger your pull. By means of a pull a man can exert a deflecting influence on Government action. A Government left to itself will generally want to do the right thing. The head of a public department gets interested in his work, and devises many things for the public good. But what does the man with the pull care about the public good? What are laws and regulations, or the rights of individuals, or the efficiency of the public service to him? Such ideas are foreign to all his ways of thinking. All he knows is that he did his work, and that he wants his reward. You complain sometimes that the public service is not what it ought to be; but under such a system how can it be what it ought to be? Yet it is *your* service; it is your money that goes to maintain it; and in whose interest should it be run but in yours? Why should any man have it in his power to cause that to be done which is not in your interest?

An earnest appeal to the public on these lines could hardly fail of producing some good effect. There are other points of view which might be taken. Surely it is somewhat undemocratic that in each locality there should be a boss who more or less commands the avenues of approach to a Government that is supposed to exist for all. Why should one man be more readily listened to than another upon a matter of public business? Do we not all pay taxes alike? Why should one man have to go and

put himself under obligation to another, whom the business in hand does not in the least concern, and with whom he may, perhaps, strongly object to come into contact? It is for the people to remedy this evil. It is for the people to seize the idea that the present system deprives them of a free suffrage, and that it tends to corrupt the suffrage by giving men all kinds of mercenary motives for supporting one party rather than another. In the jargon of party politics those who vote against the party to which we belong are spoken of as "our enemies." Why "our enemies?" Is it not a hateful thought that we must make an enemy of a man who differs from us on some question of public policy, or in his appreciation of certain public men? Under the present system a Government is supposed to be greatly beholden to its supporters. The understanding is, "Put us in office, or keep us in office, and we will show you special favour. We want office and you want favours; let us do business on that basis." Well, the basis is not a good one, and it says something for human nature and inspires a certain amount of confidence in the larger currents of influence that make for good in the general economy of things, that, upon such a basis, government should be as well carried on as it is.

The fact is that there is a higher public opinion abroad in the country with which politicians have to reckon; and it is this higher opinion which forms the strongest support of the public man who desires to do his duty to the whole country. The machine even feels its force at times, as we see by some of the men it brings forward. A "strong" man is wanted to contest a certain constituency, and the strength of the strong man sometimes—not unfrequently—lies in the fact that he is a good man—a man with a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, for kindness of nature and public spirit. The sense of public duty grows rapidly upon such men; and, when they come into contact with the administrative system of the country, they perceive the iniquity of trying to twist it out of shape in order to serve their own private purposes. They recognize that "business is business" in a sense far different from that in which the phrase has sometimes been used. If patronage is forced upon them—and in a certain position a man cannot escape it—they exercise it with moderation, and, as far as possible, with an eye to the public good. But as to patronage in general, they sympathize with the feeling Sir Robert Peel had on the subject when, in a letter to Cobden, he spoke about "the odious power of patronage." Men of this character are not those whom the machine likes best to deal with. There are meannesses to which they will not stoop; there are vengeance they will not perpetrate; there are enmities they will not recognize. When men of superior character are forced, as they sometimes are, out of public life, it is this that breaks their spirit, the everlasting cropping up in their correspondence of paltry suggestions and impossible, if not iniquitous, demands.

The lesson I draw from these facts is that more trust should be reposed in the people, and that the people should put more trust in themselves.

A recent writer has spoken of a certain course of education as tending to "substitute for those warm, wholesome sympathies which are the safest guides in understanding our fellows and regulating our conduct towards them, a cold, critical demeanour of superiority." I trust that such an education is not imparted by any institution of learning in this country. There is something, however, even worse than the "cold, critical demeanour of superiority," and that is a cold, calculating intention to exploit our fellow-men for our own personal advantage. This is a feeling which, I fear, is not unknown among the rising generation of to-day. It is a very serious question at every epoch: What are the young men thinking of? Or to put it more precisely: What are their plans for the future and with what eyes do they look on the world in which they are shortly to play their part? Is each resolving to play solely for his own hand, or are some of them wondering how they can best serve their fellow-men? Surely in a civilization the religion of which is founded on the idea of self-sacrifice, there should not be wanting some volunteers for the cause of public righteousness. If any word of mine could influence those who are entering on life and who may look forward to a public career, I would say: Let disinterested and high-minded regard for the progress and honour of the country which has nourished you be the basis of all your action. Refuse to believe those who tell you that guile and finesse are the chief resources of the statesman, for nothing can be less true; they are the resources of the man who is too weak, too deficient in courage and in large views of public policy, to be a statesman in the best sense. Over three hundred years ago the greatest of English poets summed up the political wisdom which he imagined to have come to the mighty Wolsey from his long converse with affairs, and also from his later misfortunes, in these memorable lines:—

"Love thyself last, cherish those hearts that hate thee;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace
To silence envious tongues. Be just and fear not.
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be t' y country's,
Thy God's and truth's."

It requires courage, it requires faith, it requires enthusiasm, to lay out one's life on this plan; but are these qualities dead in this Canada of ours? The times call loudly for men who will apply themselves to politics with the high purpose, not of leading a party to victory, and sharing in the spoils of party triumph, but of raising the public life of the country to a higher plane, and quickening throughout the land the sense of public duty. An excellent writer, the late Sir Henry Taylor, has said that a statesman should have such a disposition that "he may *sum out* all the good in men's natures." Here is a much better clue to the true nature of statesmanship than any that a cynical philosophy can afford. There is also a saying of Burke's that I greatly admire: "We have no other materials to work with than those out of which God has been pleased to form the inhabitants of this island." This means that we should not

wait for millennium to take our stand on the side of justice and truth in national affairs, but, accepting the world as it is, we should do it now. If we wait for the millennium, we shall wait till our valuable assistance is no longer required. But if we fear that circumstances may now and again be too strong for us, let us consider this saying of a great writer whom I have already quoted, James Russell Lowell: "It is loyalty to great ends, even though forced to combine the small and opposing motives of selfish men in order to accomplish them, that we demand in public men." It seems to me that in these three sayings we have the outlines of a whole scheme of statesmanship. There is no nobler ambition than political ambition if, high above every personal aim, is kept the thought of public service. All cannot hope to occupy a central place in the political arena, but there is useful work to be done by every one who believes in his heart that the public life of the nation should be based on equity and truth, and upon whom the conviction has been forced that every taint of interested motive in the support of a candidate or a party contains the promise and potency of full-blown political corruption. To act steadily upon these views in the humblest private sphere is to render the state most honourable service.
